

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2823

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to requiring a study of school district curriculum.

Brief Description: Requiring a study of school district curriculum.

Sponsors: Representatives Lovick, Dunshee, McCoy, Santos, Simpson and Hasegawa.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/1/06, 2/2/06 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the College of Education at the University of Washington, by December 1, 2007, to review Washington's public school curriculum to determine the degree to which the curriculum accurately includes the history, contributions, and contemporary experiences of people of color and to identify barriers that may impede the successful adoption and use of such a curriculum.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; P. Sullivan, Vice Chair; Haigh, Hunter, McDermott, Priest, Santos and Wallace.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Curtis, Shabro and Tom.

Staff: Sarah Ream (786-7303).

Background:

Washington has a diverse mix of ethnic groups and cultures. These ethnic groups and cultures are reflected in Washington's public school population. According to data from the Superintendent of Public Instruction, approximately 5.7 percent of the public school children in Washington are black, 8 percent are Asian or Pacific Islander, 2.8 percent are Native American, 12.85 percent are Hispanic, and 70.26 percent are white.

Ethnic differences exist on students' scores on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). For example, for the 2004-2005 school year administration of the WASL, 77 percent of the white and 78.8 percent of the Asian students who took the tenth grade Reading WASL met standard. In contrast, 55.8 percent of the Native American students, 53.1 percent of the Hispanic students, and 53.7 percent of the black students met standard in reading. Similar differences were reflected in the other WASL content areas.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The College of Education at the University of Washington will review the curriculum offered by Washington's public schools to determine the degree to which the curriculum accurately includes the history, contributions, and contemporary experiences of people of color. The review will also identify barriers that may impede the successful adoption and use of such a curriculum.

The report, including findings and recommendations, is due to the Legislature by December 1, 2007.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The curriculum review will examine the degree to which public schools' curriculum accurately, as compared to "fully and accurately," includes the history, contributions, and contemporary experiences of people of color.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (Original bill) The school curriculum in this state does not address the history and cultures of people of color. The study called for in the bill is required to assess the size of the problem and the degree to which progress is or is not being made. Knowing what the barriers are is the first step to removing them. Removing barriers will assist parents with navigating through the school system. Without this bill, children of color are condemned to lives of poverty.

Relevancy, rigor and relationships are essential to academic success. Institutional racism exists in schools and the schools' culture affects students' performance. Students of color are put into a Euro-centric cultural and historical mold, which they do not all fit into. This sends a message that students of color do not belong and makes them feel irrelevant and disenfranchised. Students should be allowed at a younger age to realize that they are part of a broader community. Almost all students, when asked, state they would like a more culturally

inclusive history curriculum. The current curriculum does not identify the contributions of people of color to the nation and the state.

African-Americans are noticeably absent from history texts and curriculum, which causes African-American students to have lower expectations for themselves and difficulty forming positive self-identities. If these students knew about the history and contributions of African Americans, their outlooks on history, science, and math might change and they would gain the motivation to aim high.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Lovick, prime sponsor; Thelma Jackson, African-American Think Tank; Rosaland Jenkins, Commission on African-American Affairs; Gerita Cochran; Dan Weiner; Lily Lopez, Latino Student Union; Angelita Chavez, Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano/a De Aztlan (MECHA); Paul J. Arambul Jr., Latino Student Union; Maria Gonzales, League of Education Voters; Sally Brownfield, Washington State Indian Education Association; and Larry Cordier, Alliance for Diversity and Equity for Native American/Alaskan Parent Committee.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.